

For immediate release
August 23, 2006

Contact: Sue Davis
713-723-6011/sue@suedavis.net

GHRA Calls for Total Smoking Ban

***The GHRA President will be available today to discuss this release. Please let me know if you would like to schedule an interview.

The Greater Houston Restaurant Association (GHRA) is calling on the Houston City Council to pass a total ban on smoking in all public facilities, including restaurants, stand-alone bars, private and country clubs, hotels and private functions in public buildings.

"If the argument for implementing a smoking ban is that second hand smoke is damaging to the health of employees and customers, then it is only logical to extend that protection to employees and customers at all establishments regardless of where the food or beverage is being served," said GHRA President Carl Walker of Brennan's of Houston.

"The city can learn from the experience of Dallas restaurateurs where the restaurant only smoking ban was devastating" Walker explained. "In the first year of Dallas' ban, alcohol sales at restaurants dropped nearly \$12 million while increasing by a similar amount in surrounding cities which did not have smoking bans."

As the largest contributor of sales tax in Houston, as well as the largest employer, the restaurant industry is a vital part of the city's economy. The GHRA believes the city must consider the economic impact of a smoking ban applied only to restaurants, as well as the impact on all employees and customers in food and beverage establishments if the goal of the ordinance is to protect health and safety.